## REMARKS

Claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 20-24 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 6 is amended and claims 22-24 are added. The amendments and added claims introduce no new matter. Claim 11 is canceled with prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in that claim. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action objects to the drawings as not depicting the brush recited in claim 11. The cancellation of claim 11 obviates this objection. Withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9-11, 20 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP-A-07-231847 (hereinafter JP '847) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,113,881 to Lin et al. (hereinafter "Lin"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action concedes that JP '847 does not disclose a kettle washing means having an ultrasonic generator. The Office Action relies on Lin to remedy the shortfall. The Office Action asserts that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to have provided JP '847 with ultrasonic generating means including transducers in the manner suggested by Lin for propagating ultrasonic waves to the water supplied in the rice kettle, if desired. These assertions are incorrect for at least the following reasons.

Claim 6 recites, among other features, a rice kettle washing means for washing an inner wall of the rice kettle, the rice kettle washing means having an ultrasonic generator propagating ultrasonic waves to water supplied to the rice kettle. Lin discloses a device for the ultrasonic cleaning and disinfecting of fruit and vegetables, which facilitates removing substances from surfaces of fruit and vegetables (Abstract). Thus, for reasons similar to those previously presented regarding the combination of JP '847 and U.S. Patent No. 5,498,431 to

Lindner, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have found a teaching or suggestion in the applied references to arrive at a rice kettle washing means for washing an inner wall of the rice kettle having an ultrasonic generator propagating ultrasonic waves. The conclusory statement that it would have been obvious to combine these references "if desired" does not establish specific objective evidence in the prior art that would have led to the specific combination of features.

As indicated previously with respect to Lindner, Lin does not teach, nor can it reasonably be considered to have suggested, such features at least because cleaning foodstuff does not correspond to washing the sides of a cooking kettle. As such, Lin does not remedy the conceded shortfall in the application JP '847 to subject matter of the pending claims.

Additionally, JP '847 does not teach, nor can it reasonably be considered to have suggested, the features attributed to it by the Office Action. JP '847 is directed to equipment that carries out automatic washing of an iron pot after performing cooking rice (see paragraph [0001] of the English-language translation). The apparatus may take a pot, from which cooked rice has been removed, and transport it to a washing station. (see Figs. 2 and 4). In the washing station, either a pot or lid may be adsorbed by a sucker on a vertically movable arm and/or rotated by the manipulator and brought into contact with a rotating brush in a tank. (see Figs. 4, 5 and 7).

Claim 6 recites, among other features, an automatic rice cooking apparatus provided with a water supplier for supplying water into a rice kettle placed at a predetermined position and a discharger for discharging water supplied into the rice kettle to the outside of the rice kettle, and a rice kettle washing means for washing an inner wall of the rice kettle placed at the predetermined position after rice boiling. JP '847 does not teach, nor can it reasonably be considered to have suggested, such features at least because no corresponding water supplier or discharger are identified in the Office Action, or disclosed in the reference, that operate in

a corresponding fashion with a rice kettle placed at a predetermined position that corresponds to the position in which the rice kettle is washed by any rice kettle washing means.

Further, regarding claim 2, JP '847 discloses a rice cleaning tub that discharges rice and water into an iron pot (see paragraph [0013] and Figs. 1 and 2). Claim 2 recites, among other features, a rice rinses means and the controller operates controls so that the rinsing means rinsing rice supplied into the rice kettle by the rice supplier and then the rice boiling means boils the rice. JP '847 teaches cleaning the rice in rice cleaning tub before the rice is supplied into the rice kettle. Such a configuration does not correspond to a rinsing means that rinses rice supplied into the supply kettle.

This analysis applies to the features of claim 10 as well, which recites the rice kettle washing means serves as the rice rinsing means, and the water supplier and the discharger are in common use for the rice rinsing and the rice kettle washing. As discussed above, in JP '847, any rice kettle washing means is clearly distinct from the rice cleaning tub, and no corresponding water supplier and discharger are in common use for the rice rinsing and rice kettle washing.

Regarding claims 9, 20 and 21, the Office Action does not identify, nor does the method of operation disclosed in JP '847 of lowering a pot into a tank to be scrubbed by rotating brush suggest the features regarding a corresponding discharger with a suction port vertically movable to a lower limit position above an inner bottom surface of the rice kettle by a predetermined distance as recited in claims 20 and 21, and further recited in claim 9.

In view of the above-discussed method of operation in JP '847, including a separate rice cleaning tub (2), washing station (E) and cooking station (C), it is clearly unreasonable to assert that one of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to combine the food cleaner in Lin with any of the components of JP '847 to obviously arrive at the subject matter of the pending claims. The Office Action does not even attempt to suggest how such a

combination would be achieved nor would such a combination apparently be possible based on, for example, the configuration of the fixed cleaning tank 12, in Lin, to which the ultrasonic transducers 24 are attached. Certainly one of ordinary skill in the art would not have found obvious modifying the simple movable iron pots in JP '847, that are transported between the various stations identified above.

For at least the above reasons, the applied references are not combinable in the manner suggested, and no permissible combination of the references can reasonably be considered to have suggested, the combinations of all of the features positively recited in claims 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 20 and 21. Additionally, claim 3 is likewise allowable at least for the dependence of this claim on an allowable base claim, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that this claim recites.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 20 and 21 are respectfully requested.

Added claims 22-24 are likewise allowable, at least for the respective dependence of these claims, directly or indirectly, on an allowable based claim, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

For example, claim 22 recites, among other features, the ultrasonic generator is attached to the rice kettle so that a surface of the ultrasonic generator for ultrasonic generation contacts an outer surface of the rice kettle, and is configured to directly vibrate leftover rice attached to the inner wall of the rice kettle. The applied references do not teach, nor can they reasonably be considered to have suggested, such features at least because the allegedly corresponding ultrasonic generator in Lin is attached to the container (or cleaning tank), and indirectly vibrates vegetables floating in the water.

Claims 23 and 24 recite, among other features, the controller is configured to operate the ultrasonic generator in a first mode for rinsing rice to be cooked and in a second mode for

separating leftover rice attached to the inner wall of the rice kettle. The applied references do not teach, nor can they reasonably be considered to have suggested, such features at least because the references do not contemplate controlling an ultrasonic generator in corresponding modes, including a second mode for separating leftover rice attached an inner wall of the rice kettle.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 20-24 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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